

VZCZCXYZ0016
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #0480/01 0930858
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 020858Z APR 08
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8625
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8126
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 9365

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000480

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their April 2 news coverage on the meeting Tuesday between president-elect Ma Ying-jeou and President Chen Shui-bian, the first since the presidential election; on the "1992 consensus"; on Ma's interest in visiting the United States before his inauguration; and on the infighting and reform currently going on within the defeated DPP. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" cautioned the public that China will use the "1992 consensus" to make Taiwan swallow its bait. An op-ed in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said Washington is the biggest winner in Taiwan's presidential election, as a Taiwan that is democratic and does not pursue de jure independence can best meet the U.S.'s interests. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said China's affirmation of the "1992 consensus" has "opened up new possibilities between the two sides" of the Taiwan Strait. End summary.

[Ed. Note: A searchable archive of past issues of AIT/Taipei's media review products may be found at www.intelink.gov/communities/state/taiwanmediareview.]

A) "Take Precautions against China Using the '1992 Consensus' to Lure Taiwan to Swallow the Bait"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (4/2):

"... For China, the one-China [principle] is a guaranteed lucrative business; from the UN to the various countries [in the world], when they refer to one China, by all means they mean the People's Republic of China. If Taiwan agrees to one China, it will surely be viewed as part of China. This is why China has been working proactively over the past few years in an effort to mold the one-China [principle], and it obviously has achieved certain effects. As for the respective interpretations [of one China], be it the Republic of China or Taiwan, neither will be accepted by China. That is why doctrines advocating one country on either side [of the Taiwan Strait], such as 'two Chinas,' and 'one China and one Taiwan' are viewed as synonyms of 'separatism.' China even wants to wipe out the Dalai Lama, who pursues only self-rule for Tibet, so how can it tolerate a two states doctrine in the Taiwan Strait? ...

"The fact that China has two different versions for internal and external use was evidenced in its notes documenting the telephone conversation between U.S. President George W. Bush and its Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao last week. China's official documentation only mentioned 'one China,' but in the English text of the Xinhua News Agency press release, it talked about [both sides agreeing to] 'differ on its definition.' ... The fact that White House staffers said they were pleasantly surprised by such a development showed that the United States has already stepped into the trap. Ma's response to [Bush and Hu's] call also highlighted the initial effect of such a scheme. The subsequent [possible scenario will be that] China will continue 'not to interpret' the one-China [principle] and

let the new KMT administration mistakenly believe that it has gained what it desires from the talks [with Beijing] over direct transportation, tourism and the signing of a peace pact. Meanwhile, it will play its one-China trump card at a critical moment, thus forcing Ma to make concessions for fear of failing to keep his campaign promise. ..."

B) "The United States Is the Big Winner"

Assistant Professor Hsu Yung-ming of Soochow University's Department of Political Science opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (4/2):

"The results of Taiwan's presidential elections showed that Ma Ying-jeou of the Blue camp defeated DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh with an overwhelming seven million votes. Given the difference of two million votes, the DPP is, without a doubt, the big loser. But the true big winner is about to pop out now, and it may be the United States on the other side of the Pacific Ocean.
...

"These multilateral, complex but rhythmic actions [i.e. the White House' congratulatory message to Ma, the announcement of the telephone conversation between President George W. Bush and Chinese Hu Jintao over the '1992 consensus,' and AIT Chairman Raymond Burghardt's recent visit to Taiwan] gave people the feeling of déjà vu compared with the year 2000, when Chen Shui-bian was about to give his 'Four Nos and one Without' speech. The difference lies in the fact that [Washington] aimed at restraining the new [Chen] administration from tilting toward Taiwan independence and thus used Chen's pledge to the United States to placate an anxious Beijing. This time, the Americans have indirectly endorsed 'one China with respective interpretations,' a position asserted by the KMT, and brought together Washington's 'one-China policy,' Beijing's 'one-China principle' and the KMT's 'one China with respective

interpretations' to form an ambiguous 'one-China consensus' via the '1992 consensus,' in which the only overlapping part is that Taiwan is part of China.

"As for which China it refers to here, the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party each has its own view. The United States recognizes the common ground and the difference between the two sides and [asserts that] the final resolution must be peaceful. The difference here lies not in one China, but the respective interpretations that neither side recognizes of the other.

"As it stands now, the DPP's defeat was no longer an election failure of certain political figures or parties. It also indicated that Taiwan independence is no longer an important issue on the agenda for future cross-Straits talks. In other words, de jure Taiwan independence and other relevant issues have been completely excluded from the cross-Straits one-China framework jointly concocted by the United States, China and the KMT. Even though the DPP pleaded that it wants to participate in future cross-Straits talks, and even though President Chen Shui-bian, in a meeting with Burghardt after the election, cast doubts on the existence of the '1992 consensus,' they were merely weak protests. These protests can no longer stop a long-term and stable one-China framework from taking shape among Washington, Beijing and Taipei. This new power alliance has already excluded the DPP and its advocacy of Taiwan independence.

"A Taiwan that is democratic and does not pursue de jure independence is perhaps [the best scenario] that meets U.S. interests. [Taiwan's] democracy can be used to contain China but will not allow the island to be annexed by China, and a Taiwan that does not pursue de jure independence will not interfere with the exchange of interests between Washington and Beijing, as the two will not have to wage war against each other because of Taiwan independence. For the United States, such a Taiwan will no longer be a troublemaker but a major pillar which will collaborate with Beijing on a stable and peaceful framework. Lee Teng-hui is indeed very experienced in discerning the intimate relationship between Ma and the United States, which will bring Taiwan back to the role of a dependent regime as during the reign of Chiang Ching-kuo."

C) "Ma's 3-Noes' Policy Viable"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post"
[circulation: 30,000] editorialized (4/2):

"... Responding favorably via Bush to Ma's call for a peace pact, Hu voiced his 'expectation' that both sides would 'create preconditions to formally end mutual hostility.' Expecting 'excellent' ties with Taiwan under Ma, Washington has regained an upper hand vis--vis Beijing. The affirmation of the '1992 consensus' has thus opened up new possibilities between the two sides. In its formal statements, Beijing has always insisted that talks should take place under the 'one China' principle - which leaves Taipei little room to maneuver. The fact that Hu used the term '1992 consensus' suggests greater flexibility.

"Beijing, which has largely remained silent on Ma's landslide win, is still waiting to see what he actually does when he takes office on May 20. But Ma could lose the domestic support for him to move ahead if Beijing adopts the conservative approach. This history of cross-strait relations has shown goodwill was often depleted by the wait-and-see game. ..."

YOUNG